Gard, R. Radio Script

There are interesting place names in this Province. A name in Alberta which has roused a good deal of international comment is the name "Medicine Hat". I don't know whether you remember the picture of American Places that appeared in Life Magazine about a year ago -- there was a picture of Medicine Hat . . . the River Valley, as I remember . . . and a bit from Stephen Benet's poem, "American Names". . . . "the plumed war-bonnet of Medicine Hat".

Kipling, you know, was very fond of Medicine Hat. He wrote quite a bit about the place . . . called it "the town that was born lucky, with all Hell for a basement." A good deal of his writing about Medicine Hat had to do with a desire on some of the Hat folk to change the name of their town. Kipling was dead set against this, he wrote: that the town name was the soul of the place . . . the thing that drew the feet of young men toward it . . . that to change the name of the place would break faith with the pioneers, and with the mass of legend that has grown up about the name.

There are many, many legends that tell how the town got its name. These legends range from "a moon shadow seen by an Indian who remarked how like the shadow was to the hat of the Medicine man" . . . to how a beautiful Indian maiden was sacrificed to the serpent which dwells under the surface of the South Saskatchewan River . . . so that the maiden's

lover might obtain a sacred medicine hat that would bring victory to his tribe. Perhaps the legend that is best known and which may be nearer the truth, is the one that tells about a great battle between the Crees and the Blackfoot. How the Crees persued the Blackfoot across the river and how the Blackfoot medicine man lost his hat in the middle of the stream . . . taken by his own people as a sign of defeat. . . . Bob Edwards, editor of the Eye Opener, called Medicine Hat Calomel Chapeau. Yes, Medicine Hat as a name has excited much international curiosity.

In fact, there are hundreds of names in Alberta that arouse wide interest. I might mention Cardston, named after Charles Oral Card, who led the first Mormon settlers here from Utah in 1887 . . . I might mention Trochu, named after Colonel Louis Trouch, and founded about 1905 by a group of French Cavelry officers who left France because of religious troubles. I might mention Lloydminster, named after the well-known Bishop Lloyd, famous adviser and tower-of-strength of the Barr Colony, founded in 1903. Here's a really famous Alberta story, and widely known, too . . . how the Reverend I. M. Barr had the idea of establishing an all-British Colony in Western Canada; how he set out with 2000 colonists from Liverpool; the troubles and the hardships they all went through. . . . There's some humor in the tale, too, of course.

I might mention the great Alberta rivers . . . certainly internationally famous . . . how the Peace River was named as the result of a peace pact between the Beaver and Slave

Indians . . . or, the Athabasca, and its name which means: Place Where there are Reeds.

One could go on and on with the Alberta names.

Speaking of rivers and waterways, of course, we find songs about them. Water has always inspired singing and poetry. Now here in Alberta I've been on the lookout for river and waterway songs. There are some ballads of the voyageurs, and there are some right pretty other songs, too. Here's one they sing about the Peace River. I think perhaps my friend, John Sweeney, the "Bard o' the North" at Fairview, wrote this:

There's a river that is flowing down toward the northern sea.
'Tis not famed in song or story, still it holds a charm for me.
It has called me from the southland where the starry banner blows,
And I've settled down forever where the Great Peace River flows.

I've a little moss chinked cabin just beyond its northern shore,
Where I hope to live contented till this span of life is o'er.
May life's cares pass lightly o'er me, all its troubles and its woes,
Be to me a fleeting memory where the Great Peace River flows.

We have come from every nation, they have sent their very best
To uphold the flag of freedom in this great and glorious west.
And no foreign feet dare trample on our pretty prairie rose;
'Tis the emblem of our country where the Great Peace River flows.

> When I get the final summons from the courthouse in the skies,
> And the judge of all the Judges, may he deem it no surprise,
> If I ask him just one favor -- He may grant it, no one knows --
> Send me back to Fair Alberta where the Great Peace River flows.

So maybe we'd all be a bit better off if we'd take a little time to listen to what our neighbors are saying . . . the stories they tell, the sayings they use. In a Ukrainian home, for instance, you may hear the mother advise her son: He who flies high falls low! . . . or in time of hardship, they may say: Troubles never come singly. . . . or, God gives as He Himself knows. . . . The father may tell his son: Gold helps the man who respects his parents. . . and so forth.

In the Peace River Country on a mysterious night when the Northern Lights are playing across the whole sky, you may hear someone say: "Don't whistle when the lights are shinin' or it'll call down the Evil Spirits."

Or here in the Park Belt country around Edmonton, a farmer may look at the sky and mutter to himself: "Mackeral sky. Three days wet, and three days dry." Guess, I can plant.

There is a big collecting job to be done, too. You can help. Study this question: What are <u>Alberta</u> traditions? . . . what are our <u>Canadian</u> traditions? Whom do we have here that we might compare to Paul Bunyan, Davy Crockett, John Henry, Johnny Appleseed, Mike Fink, Wild Bill Hickok, Jesse James, Big-Foot Wallace? What are our myths, our famous jests, our practical jokes? Our countryside games and songs, our nursery tales, our

animal yarns, our ghost stories, our local proverbs . . ?

Listen for these things and note them . .. you have fine traditions here. Maybe now is the time to begin to fix some of them, to help a lot of other people in orther parts of the continent and the world to know the traditions of the West, as they are unconsciously known by the farmer, rancher, the grocer, and the trader.